

Message Text

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SUBJ: BEHIND THE SCENES OF THE ALI-FOREMAN POSTPONEMENT

1. APPARENT AGREEMENT BY ALL CONCERNED REGARDING POSTPONEMENT OF ALI-FOREMAN MATCH UNTIL OCTOBER 22 CONCEALS SOME HARD IN-FIGHTING AND NEGOTIATING UNDERTAKEN BY PARTICIPANTS IN 90-MINUTE BEHIND-CLOSED-DOORS MEETING AT INTERCONTINENTAL HOTEL AFTERNOON OF SEPTEMBER 17.

2. IT WAS APPARENT SHORTLY AFTER THE INJURY WAS INCURRED THAT THE FIGHT WOULD HAVE TO BE POSTPONED AND THE RUMOR CIRCULATING THAT THE GOZ WAS ABOUT TO ANNOUNCE A ONE-WEEK POSTPONEMENT FELL BY THE WAYSIDE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY AS TOTALLY IMPRACTICAL IN VIEW OF THE INJURY.

3. THE SECRET MEETING INCLUDED MANDUNGU BULA, PRESIDENT OF ALI-FOREMAN FIGHT COMMISSION AND ZAIRIAN KINGPIN OF OPERATION, DON KING, VICE-PRESIDENT OF VIDEO TECHNIQUES (AND THE "CATALYST", AS HE LIKES TO REFER TO HIMSELF), DICK SADLER, MANAGER OF GEORGE
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FOREMAN, JOHN DALY, PRESIDENT OF HEMDALE LEISURE

CORPORATION, AND TSHIMPUMPU KANYIKA, ZAIRIAN VICE-PRESIDENT OF COMMISSION, WHOM BULA KEEPS AROUND, APPARENTLY, FOR COSMETIC PURPOSES.

4. SADLER'S ORIGINAL PLAN WAS TO TAKE THE ENTIRE FOREMAN ENTOURAGE HOME TO CALIFORNIA, LET THE CUT HEAL COMPLETELY, "AND BEGIN TO CONSIDER DATES IN A MONTH OR TWO". IN FACT, HE HAD MADE INQUIRIES CONCERNING FIRST POSSIBLE PAN AM FLIGHT TO NEW YORK.

5. ZAIRIANS, HOWEVER, CONCENTRATED ON THREE ASPECTS OF SITUATION: (A) MAKE CERTAIN THE BOUT WAS NOT CANCELED AND WAS, INDEED, EVENTUALLY HELD IN ZAIRE; (B) MAKE THE INEVITABLE DELAY AS SHORT AS POSSIBLE; AND (C) KEEP THE FIGHTERS IN ZAIRE DURING THE PERIOD OF THE POSTPONEMENT.

6. BULA REALIZED THAT PARA C -- KEEPING THE FIGHTERS IN ZAIRE -- WAS THE KEY TO THE OTHER TWO ASPECTS FALLING INTO PLACE; THE WAY TO DO THAT WAS TO MAKE THE POSTPONEMENT AS SHORT AS POSSIBLE AND IT WAS BULA, HELPED BY DON KING (WHO FOR VARIOUS REASONS -- NOT ONLY FINANCIAL -- WANTED THE FIGHT TO STAY IN ZAIRE), WHO RAMMED THROUGH THE OCTOBER 22 DATE (WITH OCT 29 AS A FALL-BACK DATE). DURING THE PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE AGREEMENT, SADLER KEPT INSISTING THAT IT WAS "PREMATURE" TO FIX A DATE AT THIS TIME WHILE BULA MADE VERY CLEAR THAT AS FAR AS HE AND THE GOZ WERE CONCERNED, OCTOBER 22 WAS THE DATE.

7. THUS, BY FIXING A DATE WHICH FOREMAN'S DOCTOR DESCRIBED TO A USIS OFFICER AS THE "ABSOLUTE MINIMUM TIME NEEDED FOR FOREMAN TO RECOVER FROM THE INJURY AND GET IN SHAPE", BULA MADE IT IMPRACTICAL FOR THE FIGHTERS TO LEAVE ZAIRE, BREAK CAMP, GO BACK HOME, MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO RETURN TO ZAIRE AND SET UP TRAINING CAMP ALL OVER AGAIN, NOT TO MENTION A COMPLETE CHANGE OF EATING AND SLEEPING HABITS.

8. ACCORDING TO ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS, BULA AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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KING PRESSURED SADLER INTO GIVING IN ON VIRTUALLY EVERY POINT. SADLER, INCIDENTALLY, WAS CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT FROM THE POST-MEETING LUNCHEON. JOHN DALY, A GENTLE MAN WHOSE ONLY INTEREST IS IN GETTING HIS PROFIT OUT OF THIS FIGHT, ALSO PASSED UP BULA'S INVITATION AND DINED WITH A BBC BROADCASTER.

9. ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCES, NEITHER OF THE

TWO FIGHTERS, NOR THEIR ENTOURAGES, IS PARTICULARLY HAPPY IN ZAIRE, BOREDOM AND ISOLATION HAVE SET IN, AND THOUGH IT COULD HAVE BEEN HANDLED FOR TWO WEEKS, SIX WEEKS MAY BE ANOTHER STORY ALTOGETHER.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS IN ZAIRE INDICATE THAT BOTH FIGHTERS WILL TRAVEL OUT OF KINSHAS TO THE "INTERIOR" OF THE COUNTRY AND FOREMAN, SAYS KINSHASA DAILY ELIMA, WILL CONVALESCE IN KIVU".

11. COMMENT: BULA, WHOSE VISIBILITY HAS INCREASED ONE-THOUSAND FOLD IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS, SEEMS TO HAVE, FOR THE MOMENT, SAVED THE DAY FOR ZAIRE. DURING PRESS CONFERENCE, BULA SAID, AT ONE POINT, "I AM NOT GOD", IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT POSSIBLE RAIN THE EVENING OF THE FIGHT. "YOU COULD HAVE FOOLED ME", REPLIED DICK YOUNG OF THE NEW YORK DAILY NEWS.
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